

**Biomass Working Group Meeting Notes**  
**2/23/10 9-11 am**  
DNRC SWLO, Missoula

Attendees: Julie Kies, Angela Farr, Martin Twer, Julia Altemus, Craig Rawlings, Brian Spangler, Rob Ethridge, Roger Ziesak, Shawn Thomas, Rich Lane, Jason Todhunter. By phone: Kevin Furey, Sonya Nowakowski, Alison Berry, Chris Pileski, Joe Kerkvliet.

**Environmental Quality Council (Angela F, Sonya N)**

**Hearings related to biomass will be held March 4 and 5 in Room 172 of Capital.**

There will be opportunity for public comment/testimony—folks are encouraged to comment/support recommendations. Angela mentioned that because a state agency can't advocate for new tax credits, the recommendations to the EQC will be presented as coming from the Biomass Wkg Group members who expressed support for it—and not as the official position of the state/DNRC.

**March 4, 9am-12pm:**

EQC will hear presentations from the following:

- Northwest CHP Application Center, David Sjoding. He will talk about lessons learned from biomass CHP projects in WA, OR and ID that were funded by DOE. (BSpangler)
- Access Energy Technologies from Canada
- Chad DeLong/Tracy McIntyre may present an overview of a forestry study (tentative)
- After the three presentations, the EQC will be introduced to the draft “Harvesting Energy” report. The EQC will take public comment on the overall subject of biomass, including comment on the presentations and the report.
- The EQC will begin its discussion of policy recommendations and findings to be incorporated into the draft report.

**March 5, 3:15 pm:**

- Bob Harrington will present recommendations from Biomass Wkg Group.
- The EQC will take additional public comment on the recommendations.
- The EQC will wrap up its overall biomass discussion and discussion of policy recommendations and findings.

**Draft report “Harvesting Energy”**

- Legislative staff will introduce the EQC to the report during the March meeting. Based on the EQC's discussion, the report will be revised for the May meeting to include draft findings, recommendations, and other changes. During the month of June, the EQC will put out a call for formal public comment on the draft report and the EQC findings and recommendations. At both the May and July 2010 EQC meetings there will be an additional opportunity for comment on the draft report.
- Working group members can send corrections/suggestions to the draft “Harvesting Energy” report to Sonja Nowakowski. If working group members would like to see significant changes (items that would require substantial research) to the report or specific findings and recommendations incorporated into the report, they should be brought up to the EQC during the March meeting.

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### Update from Biomass BMP Sub-group

- Julie and Angela walked through the recommended modifications to Water Quality BMPs and the background of each (sent in a previous email). The sub-group is seeking approval of these recommendations from members of the Biomass Wkg Group before we submit them to the state BMP Working Group (their next meeting is in Spring 2010). Look for Julie’s upcoming email seeking approval and describing context for Biomass BMPs. Rob E explained that if the state BMP Working Group does adopt the biomass modifications, they will be included for a one-year trial cycle before being formally incorporated.
- Rich Lane suggested that Montana may now want to get the word out that we now have Biomass BMPs. Others discussed that we wait on that until we start to develop more of the broader biomass harvest guidelines beyond water quality BMPs through other outreach/education venues.
- Next steps of Biomass BMP sub-group. The sub-group is seeking approval from the full Working Group to proceed with their next steps in recognizing and addressing other environmental concerns related to biomass harvest. The sub-group will explore using other tools, materials, education and outreach to address concerns outside of water quality i.e. wildlife habitat, soil productivity, etc.
  - One approach Angela mentioned is developing a soils risk-rating map similar to that of NRCS that identifies soil types vulnerable to biomass harvest impacts. Shawn and Julia said that we currently use soil mapping in NEPA and MEPA. We will explore how to integrate biomass harvest w/these.
- BMP sub-group will be renamed to something like “Biomass Guidelines Sub-Group” in recognition that we are looking broader than “Best Management Practices” and will look more at developing broader educational guidance for forest practitioners and landowners.

Shawn Thomas asked if we had a charter or ground rules. No, we don’t but perhaps should develop them.

### **Working Group Webpage**

- Julie said that the webpage is up and running and provides public venue for meeting agendas, materials, member list.
- Member list--Julie raised the idea that perhaps we categorize participants in the Working Group. Julia suggested categories of Members, Technical Advisors and Observers. Julie will send an email defining these three and asking participants to choose at what level they want participate.
- Sharing reports/info—Julie raised idea that if folks have reports/materials that they want to share with the group that we create a space on the webpage to do that. Members can send items to Julie who will then review for posting in a “Resources and Publications”/similar section on the webpage. We don’t want to overwhelm everyone’s mailbox with continuous mass-mailings.
- Martin suggested we create an interactive webpage through “social text”, wiki, or sharepoint web applications to allow participants to post and view materials. This would be open to the public to view, but exclusive to members to post. Julie will explore this option.
- Rob suggested including link to EQC happenings. Julie will post.

### **DOE REAP Guaranteed Grant and Loan RFP (BSpangler)**

- DEQ and Craig Rawlings are working with Montana mills to prepare them for eligibility for the USDA Rural Energy for America Program (REAP) Guaranteed Grant and Loan RFP which will be announced in April/May 2010. Mills will be required to have energy assessments conducted in order to be eligible. DEQ is looking into cost estimates for conducting industrial energy audits and will release an RFQ seeking entities to conduct the audits. Once energy audits are completed, the mills will meet eligibility to apply to the REAP program for biomass energy retrofits. DEQ has some money to put toward the completion of audits. DNRC may be able to contribute as well. We need a cost estimate and to develop an RFP for a contractor to conduct the audits as soon as possible. Could be drafting the RFP now, or as soon as we have an idea of estimated costs and available funding.
- DOE is likely to release a draft plan for a biomass program for FY 2011 (BSpangler). CRawlings noted that whether/not any/all of the Montana mills are awarded REAP grants/loans, having energy audits and biomass feasibility studies complete, will put them well-placed for future programs such as this.

### **What is next for the Biomass Working Group? (REthridge)**

- Rob raised this question and the group agreed that the group has relevancy in being the go-to source for information on woody biomass in the state. Angela noted we will see what comes out of DOC feasibility studies (should be completed by the end of March), and the EQC’s continued work.
- Biomass Guidelines sub-group seeks blessing from working group to proceed with their next steps.
- The DNRC will internally re-assess their needs/gaps in creating our Biomass Utilization Strategy document.

- Rich Lane asked that we address the topic of the BCAP 60-day notification. The group discussed that there are other entities/venues for stating your position/comments on this and that the BWG not pursue presenting a unified comment on this.
- Craig R suggested we have someone from FSA talk to us about BCAP at the next meeting.
- Jason T stated that his involvement is in the interest of keeping the foresters working on the ground and keeping the forest industry intact.
- Rob E raised the idea that we develop a statewide, interagency bioenergy strategy sub-group of state and federal agencies. This was a recommendation that came out of the May 2009 WGA MT Bioenergy Workshop (incl. in EQC Draft Report). The intent would be to identify cross-agency issues and opportunities to streamline development of bioenergy projects.

**Action items:**

- DNRC will work on coordinating an inter-agency bioenergy strategy sub-group (Rob E, Julie K, Julia A)
- Angela will send out the final EQC recommendations soon, and inform the group about the upcoming hearing and schedule.
- Julie will send out email for approval of Biomass BMP recommendations
- Julie will send email seeking categorization of member list
- Brian Spangler will get update on question of air permits required for grinders.
- Brian Spangler will look into cost of industrial energy assessments for mills.

**Next meeting of Full Biomass Working Group:**

Tuesday, March 23, 2010.